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## LOWER GALILEE

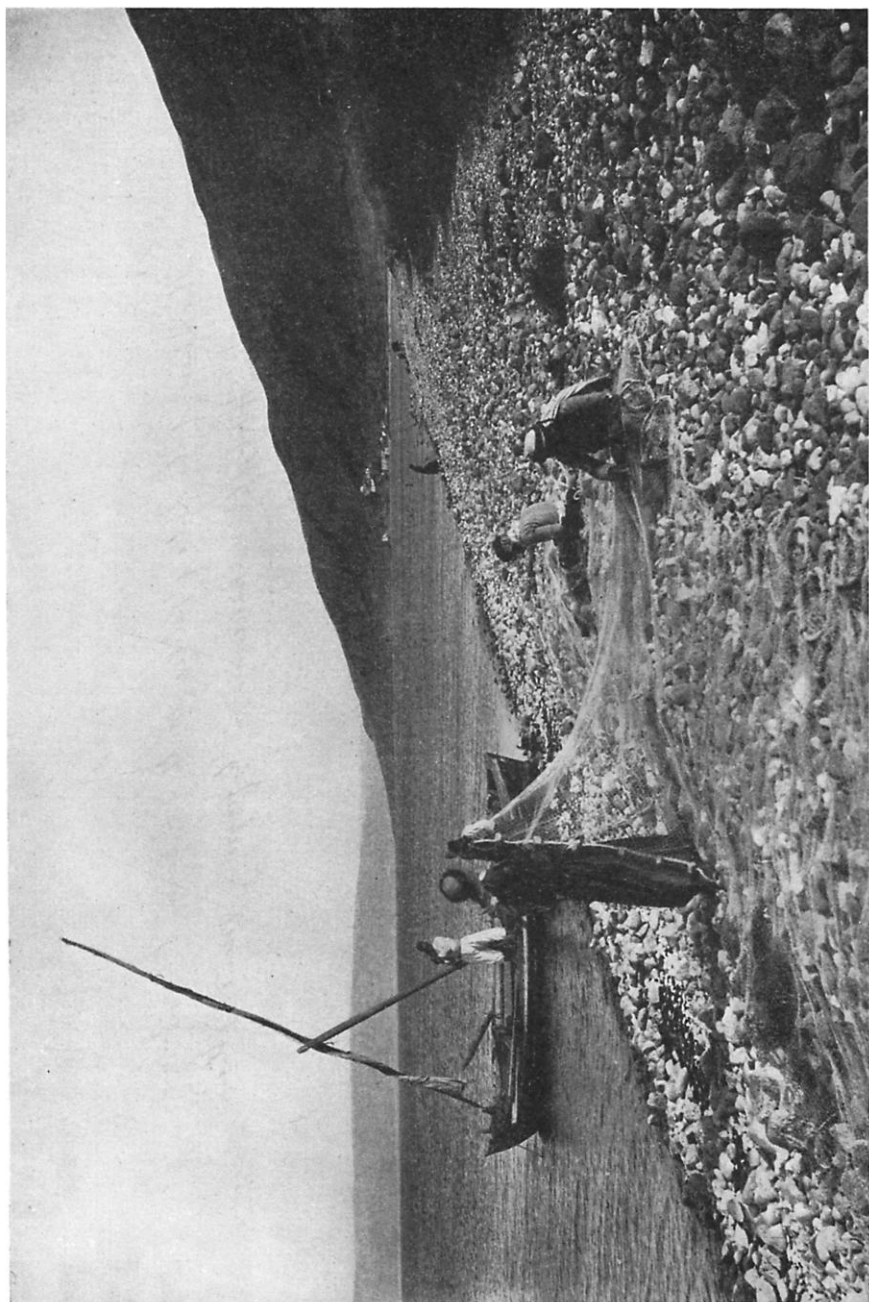
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The name Galilee is the Graecized form of the Hebrew גליל *galîl*, a word used (I Kings 6:34) to describe the “folding” or “rolling” of a door, and, as a substantive, translated a “ring” in Cant. 5:14; Esther 1:6. As a geographical expression, applied to other regions than what we know as Galilee, it is translated “country” (Ezek. 47:8) and “borders” (Josh. 13:2; 22:10, 11). There were thus several *galîls* as there were many frontiers, but the district now under consideration was known as *hag galîl* or *the galîl* (Josh. 20:7; 21:32;<sup>1</sup> I Kings 9:11; II Kings 15:29; I Chron. 6:76) or, to give it its full title, *galîl hag goyîm*<sup>2</sup> (Isa. 9:1), the “ring” or “region of the nations.” It would appear in the earliest references to have been a small region around Kedesh, though later it seems to have comprised the possessions of Zebulon and Naphtali and a considerable proportion of that of Asher and Issachar. Its frontier was an ever-changing shore line toward the “nations” on which the tide ebbed and flowed, sometimes submerging the Hebrews and sometimes driving them north. Even within this district the peoples appear always to have been, as they are today, strangely mixed in both race and religion.

The ideal physical boundaries of this region are well defined—few small provinces have naturally so secure a frontier; yet these never appear in the whole course of Jewish history to have coincided with the political limits. On the south this division of Palestine is naturally bounded by the Great Plain of Esdraelon, from the northern edge of which the hills of Nazareth rise with remarkable abruptness. To the west the Mediterranean and to the east the Jordan and its two lakes are nature’s bounds. On the north modern custom has come to limit Palestine proper—and therefore Galilee—by the extraordinary gorge of the Kasimêyeh or Litâny River. This deep

<sup>1</sup> Almost certainly also in Josh. 12:23.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Harosheth hag goyîm* (Judges 4:2), and their locality on the borders.



FISHERMEN MENDING THEIR NETS BY LAKE OF GALILEE, SOUTH OF TIBERIAS



stone there are many patches of trap-rock; all the laval outflows are on the eastern side of the water-parting. The most extensive area is that centering round the double volcanic peak known as the "Horns of Hattin." From here the lava has flowed out on all sides. It caps the limestone rocks overhanging the western side of the Lake of Tiberias and flows southeast down the wide valley of Salel el Ahma. Northward it is spread out on the fertile plain of Hattin. In the district immediately to the north of this is another great deposit, probably an entirely independent outflow through which the Rubudeyeh stream has cut its way. Almost on the water-parting itself two little outcrops from dykes appear at Umm el 'Amed and also just below Deir Hannah. Safed, though its hills are entirely of soft chalky limestone, is encircled by trap-rock. To the west and north-west lie the great volcanic plateaus of el Jish and 'Alma—each with a rain-filled crater-like pool. On the north of Safed there is a patch of this rock high up in the mountains just below Benît. To the east a great outflow occupies the *Ghor* between Lake Huleh and the Lake of Tiberias; while southward all the lower ground between the mouth of the Jordan and el 'Oreimeh is made up of terraces of black lava, through which, however, limestone hills project in places. Within sight of eastern Galilee are the numerous extinct volcanoes of the Jaulan, and the hot and sometimes sulphurous springs in the neighborhood of the Lake of Galilee are also evidences of slumbering subterranean fires. The testimony of history that this region has been the center of severe earthquakes is supported by the terrible destruction and overthrow of all the ancient remains. One other physical feature of Galilee requires passing mention, namely, the great number of rich alluvial plains. Esdraelon, Akka, Tor'an, Battauf, el Ghuweir (Gennesaret), el Huleh, Kedes, and Mês are some of the most important, and all of them are referred to elsewhere. In all, the alluvial deposits are of great depth and of extraordinary productiveness. Notwithstanding the long neglect of careful agriculture these plains still give Galilee something of her old character of wonderful fertility.

#### A. LOWER GALILEE

The Talmud<sup>3</sup> states that "Galilee contains the upper, the lower, and the valley" (i. e., the *Ghor*) and these are the three natural

<sup>3</sup> *Shebûth*, IX, 2.

divisions. The mountain region has by nature been very clearly divided into a southern lower part, where the hills are gentle and rounded, the plains wide and fertile and the natural roads easy and direct, and a northern or upper part, where there are lofty mountain peaks, deep narrow valleys and high plateaus. The natural dividing line is the great mountain range which runs due east and west to the north of the plain of Rameh, rising there to the point Jebal Haidar (3,440 feet) and culminating at the eastern end at the peaks of Jebalat el 'Arûs (3,520 feet). Beyond the deep chasm of Wady el Tawahîn the direction of this range is continued by the southern wall of the mountain mass of Safed, and terminates at the eastern extremity of Jebal Kan'an (2,761 feet). When it is remembered that the highest point in all Lower Galilee is only 1,843 feet above the sea, and most of it is much lower, the outstanding nature of this great barrier is manifest. Lower Galilee, overlooked from such a height as Jebal Haidar, appears as a plain broken by wave behind wave of rounded hills. The lines of narrow plain land, stretching from the plain of Akka in the west to the Jordan Valley in the east, are most striking. Indeed this is the most noticeable feature in the geography of this region; the whole land consists of parallel ranges of hills running east and west with wide fertile valleys between. From south to north these ranges are Jebal Dahi (1,690 feet)—the "Little Hermon" of the mediaeval pilgrims—the Nazareth Range with Mount Tabor, the Tor'an Range and the Southern and Northern Ranges of esh Shaghûr. The middle of these ranges—the Tor'an—only extends half way across the land westward, and all these hill formations, but particularly the three southern ones, make a curved southward bend at their eastern end as they approach the Jordan or the lake. At these ends, too, the limestone formation is overlaid with much volcanic trap.

The great Plain of Esdraelon—known as Merj ibn el 'Amir—appears naturally rather as a frontier or an arena of battle than as an integral part of Galilee. The domination over the plain appears to have belonged sometimes to the southern and sometimes to the northern inhabitants, but in times of weakness on the part of both, the Children of the East would sometimes sweep upon it and devastate its fruitful harvests like a swarm of locusts. The great western bay between Jebal Dahi and Tabor is certainly physically, as it has in history been

politically, an integral part of Galilee, and Carmel, at one period at any rate, followed its northern mountain neighbor. As regards the great triangular main stretch of plain the cities at the edge of the hills, such as Geba (Sheikh Abreik), Gabatha (Jebata), Simonias (Simûnieh) must have grown their cereals there, just as Nazareth does today. That the frontier was very ill-defined in the time of Josephus is shown by the fact that though he puts the northern boundary of Samaria at Ginea<sup>4</sup> (Jenîn), at the southern edge of the plain, he puts<sup>5</sup> the southern boundary of Galilee at Xaloth (the Chesulloth of the Old Testament), now Iksal, at the northern edge.

The Nazareth Range of hills reaches at Jebal es Sih, about three miles northeast of Nazareth, a height of 1,838 feet, and in the outlying spur of Tabor, 1,843 feet, while at Neby Sain, the hill immediately above Nazareth itself, a height of 1,602 feet is attained. From this central mass the ground falls on all sides. Westward there is an extension of low forest-bearing hills lying between the Kishon on the south and its tributary, the Wady el Malek, on the north. On the southern edge of this hill-country lies Sheikh Abreik, once a village of much importance to judge from its tombs and caves, and probably the Gaba, "the City of Horsemen" of Josephus<sup>6</sup> where lived the horsemen of Herod, while near the northern edge is the little hamlet of Beit Lahum—the Bethlehem of Zebulon. The eastern extension of the Nazareth Range consists of a series of fertile plateaus in which volcanic elements are largely mixed. The high ground runs southward at its eastern extremity where it overhangs the Jordan Valley.

North of the Nazareth range comes the Plain of Tor'an along which runs the modern carriage road from Kefr Kenna to Tiberias. This alluvial plain, five miles long by one mile wide, drains westward through the Wady el Rummaneh into the Battauf, its waters finally reaching the Kishon through the Wady el Malek. Over the main water-parting near Lubieh the eastern extension of this plain runs southeast from opposite the "Horns of Hattin," in a wide, sloping valley, strewn with volcanic stone, which drains to the Jordan by the Wady el Fejjaz. This valley is today known as the Sahel el Ahma,

<sup>4</sup> *B. J.*, III, iii, 4.

<sup>5</sup> *B. J.*, III, iii, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ant.* XV, viii, 5; *B. J.*, III, iii, 1.

and is probably Betzammin<sup>7</sup> across which Sisera rushed in headlong flight to his ignominious death. At the head of this same valley, around the scorched roads of Hattin, the unfortunate Crusaders made their last ineffectual stand against the victorious Saladin (1187).

The Kurn Hattin is the center of the Tor'an Range which here curves southeast and then south, where it overhangs the lake.



THE HORNS OF HATTIN—A VOLCANIC HILL

North of the Jebal Tor'an is the marshy plain of el Battauf, nine miles long by two miles wide, doubtless once a lake. The western end drains into the Wady el Malek, but eastward has no proper outlet, and in winter months forms a great marsh most dangerous to cross. This was the plain of Asochis of Josephus. On its northern edge is Khurbet Kâna, identified in the Middle Ages as the Cana of Galilee of John 2:1-11; 4:46, and more probably the correct site than Kefr Kenna, a village in the Nazareth mountains favored by modern ecclesiastical tradition. It would appear almost certainly to have been the Cana of Josephus (see *Vita*, §§ 16, 17, 41). Half an hour's

<sup>7</sup> Judges 4:11.



ride up a valley from this ruin is Tell Jefat, a bare rocky hill showing few remains, but without doubt the site of Jotapata,<sup>8</sup> a very important fixed point in the topography of Josephus.

Over the water-parting to the east of el Battauf there is a rapid descent to the volcanic plateau of Hattin which drains by means of the Wady el Hamâm into Gennesaret. North of the Battauf lies a somewhat confused mountain mass known as esh Shaghûr. One or two points, such as Râs Kruman (1817) and Râs Hazweh (1781), are nearly as high as the hills of Nazareth, but the average elevation is much under a thousand feet. The plateau of ʿArrabeh has, when seen from a height, the appearance of a plain, and it divides esh Shaghûr into a southern and a northern range. The drainage of this district is through Wady Shaʿîb which joins the Wady Halzûn, one of the tributaries of the Belus (Nahr Naʿrnein). On a hill rising at the western end of this high plain of ʿArrabeh is Sukhnîn, the Sikni or Siknin<sup>9</sup> of the Talmud and the Sogane<sup>10</sup> of Josephus. At its eastern end, crowning the water-parting, is the walled village of Deir Hannah, beyond which the ground rapidly sinks eastward into the Wady Selameh, a well-watered valley which drains the plain of Rameh and is continued southeast as the Wady er Rubudeyeh into Gennesaret. Wady es Salameh derives its name from Khurbet es Salameh, a ruin crowning a strong and extensive site on which once stood the city of Salamis.<sup>11</sup>

The Plain of Rameh lies between esh Shaghur and the southern range of Upper Galilee. It chiefly drains southward as described. The valley to the east of Farradeh and Kefr Anan empties its waters by the Wady Maktul into the Wady el ʿAmûd and thus to Gennesaret, while the western extension, a long open valley—Wady esh Shaghur—full of olive groves and cornfields, drains through the Wady el Halzun into the Belus at Akka. The whole of Lower Galilee is of great natural fertility. The plains are splendid arable lands; those of el Mughâr and Rameh are celebrated for their great groves of olives, a product for which Galilee was always celebrated. “It is easier,”

<sup>8</sup> See Josephus, *B. J.*, Book iii, chaps. 6 and 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Tal. Bab. Rosh.-Nash. Shannah*, 29 n.

<sup>10</sup> *Vita*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Josephus, *B. J.*, II, xx, 6.

it is said in the Talmud,<sup>12</sup> "to raise a legion of olive trees in Galilee than to raise one child in Judea." Vines are not today widely cultivated except around Rameh and, to some extent, Nazareth. The hills are in places well wooded, particularly a quadrangular patch at the southwest corner of the Nazareth range and rolling country to the northeast and east of the slopes of Tabor. The lower valleys both to the east and west are all more or less wooded. The hills of Shaghur and also those to the east of Rameh are covered with "brush wood" —a shrubby growth now replacing what was only a few years ago a forest of fine trees. The shrubs consist of dwarf oaks of several kinds, terebinths, karûb (locust trees), z'aûr (hawthorn), wild olives or figs, meis (nettle tree), and arbutus, all capable of developing into noble trees, as well as storax, bay-laurel, myrtle, caper, sumakh, and lentisk, while the water courses are adorned by great masses of beautiful oleanders, willows, planes, and, occasionally, poplars. The sycamore fig, once said to have been a characteristic product of Lower Galilee, is now scarce in these parts. Groves of sacred terebinths occur in many places and the thorny zizyphus (sidr), when covering a holy tomb, often attains noble proportions.

The water-supply of this district is rich specially in the lower ground, but even in the mountains good springs are plentiful. At many of the villages are copious springs, e. g., Seffurieh, Reineh, Nazareth, Hattin, Farradeh, while at the head of the Wady Salameh the fountains give rise to a perennial stream sufficient to work several mills. Reckoning together the mountain region and the low-lying plains east, south, and west, it would be hard to find a land at once so diversified and so richly supplied with nature's gifts. The vast majority of the historical references to Galilee, whether in the Macca-bean period, in the New Testament or the Roman wars, refer to places in Lower Galilee. This is the more natural when we notice how the great roads traversed the district. The most certainly ancient of routes is that highroad marked today by the ruins of khans which crosses lower Galilee from northeast to south, and was known in mediaeval times as the Via Maris. Coming from Damascus across the black stony Jaulan, it crossed the Jordan at the Jisr Benat Yakûb, ascended in a southwest direction to the Khan Jubb Yusuf, where,

<sup>12</sup> *Ber. Rabba*, par. 20.

after giving off branches to Safed, to Akka (via Rameh) and to Kerazeh and the mouth of the Jordan, it descended to the Khan Minyeh. From here it crossed el Ghuweir (Gennesaret) and, either by way of the Wady Hamâm, Irbid and Hattin, or (as at present) by the more open Wady Abu el Amîs, it ran up to the higher plateau, whence it ran by Khan el Tujjâr, across Esdraelon, and southward through the great pass at Lejjûn to the coast. This highroad is an extremely ancient one and may be that referred to in Isa., chap. 9. A branch of this road skirted the western shore of the lake and ran southward to Jerusalem via Beisân, Tubâs and the Plain of Makhneh, a route still strewn along its whole length with groups of Roman milestones. The broad valleys running east to west must always have been natural routes to the coast, particularly to the ancient port of Akka; one of the most important of these traversed the Plain of Tor'an, past Sufurieh, and thence led by the Wady Abellin to the Akka plain; another ran from the Khan Jubb Yusuf, across the Wady Tawahîn, past Khurbet Abu Sheb'a, Rameh and Khurbet Kabra—the Gabara of Josephus<sup>13</sup>—and into the Plain of Akka by the Wady Wazeyeh. Both these routes are in constant use today. The whole district is intersected with numberless paths, almost all of which are possible to loaded camels—except after heavy rain—and in the period of Galilee's greatness all the chief cities must have been connected by more or less well-made roads or paths.

<sup>13</sup> *Vita*, 10, 15, 25, 40, 46, 47, 61; *B. J.*, III, vii, 1. In some passages called Gadara, by a textual error.